United Nations A/54/959

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 August 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 49 (b)
United Nations reform measures and proposals: the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations

Millennium Forum

Held at United Nations Headquarters from 22 to 26 May 2000

Note by the Secretariat

1. In his note entitled "United Nations Reform: measures and proposals — A Millennium Assembly, the United Nations system (Special Commission) and a Millennium Forum" (A/52/850), the Secretary-General expressed the view that if the United Nations were to continue to play a vital role in the century ahead it would be imperative that it benefit from the imagination and engage the support of the world's people. In this connection, he proposed that non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors organize a Millennium Forum in connection with the Millennium Assembly.

2. Civil society organizations organized and convened the Millennium Forum, which was held from 22 to 26 May 2000 at United Nations Headquarters.

3. The final document, entitled "We the Peoples Millennium Forum Declaration and Agenda for Action: strengthening the United Nations for the twenty-first century", adopted by the Millennium Forum on 26 May 2000, is transmitted herewith.

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We the Peoples Millennium Forum Declaration and Agenda for Action: Strengthening the United Nations for the twenty-first century

We, the 1,350 representatives of over 1,000 non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations from more than 100 countries, have gathered at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 22 to 26 May 2000 to build upon a common vision and the work begun at civil society conferences and the United Nations world conferences of the 1990s, to draw the attention of Governments to the urgency of implementing the commitments they have made, and to channel our collective energies by reclaiming globalization for and by the people.

Our vision

Our vision is of a world that is human-centred and genuinely democratic, where all human beings are full participants and determine their own destinies. In our vision, we are one human family in all our diversity, living on one common homeland and sharing a just, sustainable and peaceful world, guided by the universal principles of democracy, equality, inclusion, voluntarism, non-discrimination and participation by all persons, men and women, young and old, regardless of race, faith, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity or nationality. It is a world where peace and human security, as envisioned in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, replace armaments, violent conflict and wars. It is a world where everyone lives in a clean environment with a fair distribution of the earth's resources. Our vision includes a special role for the dynamism of young people and the experience of the elderly, and reaffirms the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights — civil, political, economic, social and cultural.

The challenges

We begin the new millennium facing grave and interconnected challenges. As actors in the struggle for peace, justice and the eradication of poverty, NGOs encounter daily the human impact of rising violence and armed conflicts, widespread violations of human rights and unacceptably large numbers of people who are denied the means of a minimal human existence. At the same time, new and emerging diseases, such as human immunodeficiency syndrome/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), threaten to devastate entire societies.

Globalization and advances in technology create significant opportunities for people to connect, share and learn from each other. At the same time, corporate-driven globalization increases inequities between and within countries, undermines local traditions and cultures and escalates disparities between rich and poor, thereby marginalizing large numbers of people in urban and rural areas. Women, indigenous peoples, youth, boys and girls and people with disabilities suffer disproportionately from the effects of globalization. Massive debt repayments are still made by the poorest nations to the richest, at the expense of basic health care, education and children's lives. Trafficking in women, sexual exploitation, drug trafficking, money-laundering, corruption and the flow of small arms promote insecurity. States are becoming weaker, while an unaccountable transnational private sector grows stronger. A single-minded focus on economic growth through uncontrolled free markets, combined with the adjustment and stabilization policies of international financial institutions controlled by the rich creditor nations, are crippling many national economies, exacerbating poverty, eroding human values and destroying the natural environment.

Globalization should be made to work for the benefit of everyone to eradicate poverty and hunger globally; establish peace globally; ensure the protection and promotion of human rights globally; ensure the protection of our global environment; and enforce social standards in the workplace globally. This can happen only if global corporations, international financial and trade institutions and Governments are subject to effective democratic control by the people. We see a strengthened and democratized United Nations and a vibrant civil society as guarantors of this accountability. And we issue a warning: if the architects of globalization are not held to account, this will not simply be unjust; the edifice will crumble, with dire consequences for everyone. In the end, the wealthy will find no refuge, as intolerance, disease, environmental devastation, war, social disintegration and political instability spread.

We wish to put forward a series of concrete steps to strengthen cooperation among all actors at the

international, national, regional and local levels to make this vision a reality. Our Agenda for Action includes steps that should be taken by civil society, Governments and the United Nations.

A. Eradication of poverty, including social development and debt cancellation

Poverty is a violation of human rights. With some 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty, it is the most widespread violation of human rights in the world. Poverty not only exists in the developing countries but is also a dramatic and hidden reality in the industrialized countries. Particularly affected are disadvantaged and under-represented groups — indigenous people, people with disabilities, women, children, youth and the elderly. Hunger and the HIV/AIDS pandemic are also closely related to poverty. Processes of impoverishment inherent in the global economic system are resulting in increasing inequity, social injustice and violence worldwide.

The eradication of poverty has become a matter of urgency. Poverty eradication is not an automatic consequence of economic growth; it requires purposeful action to redistribute wealth and land, to construct a safety net and to provide universal free access to education. We call on our Governments and the United Nations to make poverty eradication a top political priority.

The Forum urges:

The United Nations:

1. To act as an independent arbitrator to balance the interest of debtor and creditor nations and to monitor how debt cancellation funds are spent.

2. To introduce binding codes of conduct for transnational companies and effective tax regulation on the international financial markets, investing this money in programmes for poverty eradication.

3. To immediately establish at the United Nations a global poverty eradication fund, which will ensure that poor people have access to credit, with contributions from Governments, corporations, the World Bank and other sources.

4. To adopt cultural development as the focus theme of one of the remaining years of the International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1996-2007).

Governments:

1. To implement fully the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, in partnership with all actors of civil society in an integrated and holistic framework. Governments should focus their efforts and policies on addressing the root causes of poverty and providing for the basic needs of all, giving special priority to the needs and rights of the disadvantaged and under-represented. We further call on the Governments to anchor the Copenhagen goals in their national statutes and to introduce national anti-poverty strategies that provide safety nets and basic livelihood allocation as a right.

2. To strengthen the entrepreneurial capacity of women, indigenous people and people in the informal productive sector, ensuring access to credit, to enable them to become self-employed. This is the sure way of creating jobs for all and a sustainable way of eradicating poverty.

3. To support the efforts of the poor to keep families together, with particular attention to disadvantaged and under-represented groups, including indigenous people, people with disabilities, women, children, youth and the elderly. Effective action and resources are essential for those affected by migration.

4. To address the incidence, impact and continuing human costs of HIV/AIDS. To increase spending for health research and to ensure that the fruits of this research reach the people.

5. To recognize the special potential of people with disabilities and ensure their full participation and equal role in political, economic, social and cultural fields. To further recognize and meet their special needs, introduce inclusive policies and programmes for their empowerment and ensure that they take a leading role in poverty eradication. To urge all States to apply the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

6. To review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty, particularly those with disabilities. To develop gender-based methodologies to address the feminization of poverty and to recognize the leading role of women in eradicating poverty, as outlined in the Beijing Declaration adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

7. To provide universal access to "Education for all", prioritizing free basic education and skills training for poor communities to improve their productive capacities. We call on Governments to increase budgets for education, to reduce the technology gap and to restructure educational policy to ensure that all children (girls and boys) receive moral, spiritual, peace and human rights education, while acknowledging, through programmes for families, adult literacy and the elderly, that education is a lifelong process. Special attention must be paid to the girl child. And higher education must be attainable based on merit and not only on ability to pay.

8. To move towards economic reforms aimed at equity, in particular to construct macroeconomic policies that combine growth with the goal of human development and social justice; to prevent the impoverishment of groups that have emerged from poverty but are still vulnerable to social risks and exclusion; to improve legislation on labour standards, including the provision of a minimum legal wage and an effective social system; and to restore people's control over primary productive resources as a key strategy for poverty eradication.

9. To introduce and implement programmes to eradicate corruption in Governments and civil society at large, and to promote good governance, accountability, democracy and transparency as the foundation for public ethics.

10. To adopt comprehensive, integrated policies so that priorities of such government departments as trade and defence are in line with policies for international sustainable development.

11. To promote the use of indigenous crops and traditional production skills to produce goods and services.

12. To explore the feasibility of a legally binding convention on overcoming poverty, to be drafted in effective consultation and partnership with people living in poverty themselves.

13. To cancel the debts of developing countries, including odious debts, the repayment of which diverts funds from basic needs. To improve measures to ensure that funds from debt cancellation are spent in consultation with the impoverished sections of society within the indebted nations. To direct international financial institutions to cancel 100 per cent of the debt owed to them and to establish an arbitration process that balances the interests of debtor and creditor nations, with an independent arbitrator who will ensure discipline and transparency.

14. To call on the World Trade Organization (WTO) to rectify urgently the agriculture agreements that put pressure on developing countries to liberalize food imports, threatening their rural livelihoods, employment, natural resources, indigenous knowledge, and food production and security in general.

Civil society:

1. To monitor and pressure Governments to ensure that all the 10 commitments made at the World Summit on Social Development become a reality for all. To assume our own responsibilities to help formulate and implement the national strategies for poverty eradication and to ensure the participation of the poor and marginalized communities. To create or strengthen mechanisms to monitor organizations that work against the interests of the poor.

2. To develop new relations and partnerships among community institutions, educators, scientists, researchers, local authorities, businesses, labour and NGOs in a constructive dialogue and planning process so that all can contribute their best. To pay special attention to those who have suffered most from poverty and to those who have the least opportunity to be heard by others. The poor must see themselves as real partners and must be empowered to enhance and employ their own abilities and resources in order to be of service to themselves, their families, their communities and their common home.

3. To exert our best efforts to implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — affirming the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of **all** rights, civil, political, social, economic and cultural — and to join the global movement for human dignity.

4. To improve conditions for decent work, capacity-building and participation. To encourage the media to help monitor the commitments that Governments have made.

5. To dedicate attention to the special needs of the young and the elderly, especially those from the South, and to provide opportunities for them, including access to information, and all forms of health care and education, which are essential to the eradication of poverty.

6. To direct special action to decrease high levels of youth unemployment to all global stakeholders at the local, national, regional and international levels.

B. Peace, security, and disarmament

The United Nations and its Member States have failed to fulfil their primary responsibility of maintaining peace and preserving human life. Organized armed violence is depriving millions of people all over the world — 95 per cent of them civilians — of their lives, and many millions more of their right to peace.

The victims of Hiroshima/Nagasaki A-bombs and of the century's other wars have vehemently warned us that the errors of the twentieth century must not be repeated in the twenty-first. However, the killing is continuing. Six million people have died in over 50 wars in the last decade. There have been some successes, but many of these conflicts have lasted for decades, with millions of dead. The cycle of violence begins with cultures that glorify violence and warrior virtues, and may be manifest in domestic violence.

Despite over 50 years of effort, no decisive progress has yet been made in eliminating nuclear weapons, which are still capable of destroying all life on this planet, and the circle of their possessors is expanding. For mainly commercial reasons, there is no adequate verification for treaties prohibiting biological weapons, while knowledge of how to produce them spreads. Rape continues to be used as a weapon of war. Space has been militarized and space weapons are being actively developed. For the moment, the problem is centred in a small group of eight States that are claiming for themselves the right to possess weapons that could destroy all of humankind.

Disarmament alone is not the way to peace; it must be accompanied by genuine human security. It is imperative that NGOs be included in the dialogue for peace. The world community — civil society, including younger and older people, and Governments — has the resources and knowledge to move from a culture of violence to a culture of peace.

The time has come to carry out the primary mission set forth in the United Nations Charter, "to preserve future generations from the scourge of war", and to apply the principle of non-use of force, which is fundamental to the Charter of the United Nations. Working together, both civil society and Governments can make armed conflict increasingly rare and can move, step by step, to the abolition of war.

The Forum urges:

The United Nations:

1. To carry out the objective of moving towards the abolition of war by practical means, the United Nations Secretariat and interested Governments, or a separate group of Governments, should develop a draft proposal for global disarmament to be discussed in a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. This proposal would be aimed specifically at reducing the level of armed violence throughout the world through continuing improved conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conventional disarmament and nuclear weapons abolition, in a programme designed to be promoted by a broad coalition of civil society organizations, particularly youth organizations, as well as by interested Governments.

2. To establish a corps of at least 50 professionally trained mediators for more effective conflict prevention, to assist in conflict warning, mediation and conflict resolution.

3. To authorize, through the General Assembly, the establishment of an international, non-violent, inclusive, standing peace force of volunteer

women and men to deploy to conflict areas to provide early warning, facilitate conflict resolution, protect human rights, and prevent death and destruction.

4. To draw on legal systems for conflict prevention and resolution, such as those of indigenous peoples, who have conflict resolution mechanisms of their own.

5. To ensure that no "non-discriminatory" weapons, such as landmines and sub-munitions, are used by any military force, in particular by any force or coalition acting under a United Nations mandate.

6. To assist the Security Council on conflict prevention in a more flexible way, the General Assembly should establish an open-ended conflict prevention committee to serve a rapid action conflict prevention and early warning function. It should give the world public, civil society, the United Nations, and national Governments balanced, timely information on potential conflicts and promote possible solutions.

7. To respect national sovereignty and the prohibition of the use of force, which are fundamental in the Charter of the United Nations. This principle must not be undermined. In the solution of conflicts, all peaceful methods in accordance with Chapter 6 of the Charter must be tried before measures of force are undertaken in accordance with Chapter 7. The General Assembly should set up a broad commission to analyse standards for forceful action in cases where crimes against humanity, war crimes or genocide are committed.

8. To expand the United Nations arms register in order to show the production and sale of small arms and light weapons. It should include specific names of their producers and traders.

9. To reopen the Peace Education Unit in the Department of Political Affairs, with provisions for continuous liaison with NGOs.

10. To establish a humanitarian commission composed of independent experts to work with the Security Council, the Secretary-General and other United Nations agencies. The mandate of this commission would be to assess humanitarian needs and recommend protective measures for civilian populations in times of armed conflict.

11. To establish ready police and peacekeeping forces. Sensitivity and respect for civilians, especially women and children, should be included in the training of all peacekeepers.

12. To establish an annual youth peace prize for signal accomplishments in this field.

Governments:

1. To promptly carry out their obligations in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to eliminate all nuclear weapons and to ban them. For this purpose, Governments should, by the beginning of the year 2001, convene the conference to eliminate nuclear dangers, as proposed by Secretary-General Annan. Governments should immediately undertake to close laboratories that research and develop new nuclear weapons, to de-alert nuclear weapons and to withdraw nuclear weapons from foreign States.

2. Together with nearly all Governments that participated in the recent Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference, Forum participants consider that unilateral deployment of nationwide missile defence by any country could have dangerously destabilizing effects and create pressures to permanently retain high levels of nuclear weapons or even to increase existing levels. The deployment of theatre missile defences in Asia or other regions could have serious regional destabilizing effects. Such plans should be relinquished in favour of a worldwide missile launch warning system and a conference to review methods of ending production of long-range surface-to-surface missiles and long-range bombers.

3. To expand the network of nuclear free zones until they cover all areas other than territory of weapons States and to complement that network by maritime measures that close ports to naval vessels unless they certify that they are not carrying nuclear weapons. Civil society should energetically promote all these measures to control nuclear weapons.

4. To initiate a worldwide freeze on armed forces and a 25 per cent cut in production and export of major weapons and small arms, and to that end to adopt an international code of conduct on arms

exports, as the beginning of worldwide build-down of conventional forces.

5. To implement the International Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention of 1997, also known as the Ottawa Treaty, to ban anti-personnel landmines.

6. To establish a commission at the United Nations to devise ways of stopping the technological development of new and more advanced weapons that create new imbalances in global power relationships. The Conference on Disarmament should also establish a working group on this subject.

7. To establish peace education, including coping with domestic conflict, covering all ages from young children to older adults, at all levels from pre-school through university and non-formal community education. Education for peace and conflict avoidance is essential for moving towards sustainable peace. Implementation of this obligation of each national Government should be assured by an appropriate treaty.

8. To increase their efforts to promote and to comply with international humanitarian laws, limiting the methods and means of war and protecting non-combatants, civilian populations and humanitarian personnel.

9. The international community — civil society, Governments and the United Nations — has a responsibility to stop promptly any genocide, war crimes or any massive violations of human rights. All those involved should seek to avoid any confusion between humanitarian help and military intervention.

10. To immediately adopt measures to implement the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, so that children up to the age of 18 will be prohibited from participation in armed conflict.

Civil society:

1. To give special attention and support to those disabled and injured by violent conflict, to children and the elderly, and to the reintegration into society of former combatants. Protection of war-affected children in conflict zones must become a worldwide campaign.

2. To maintain the impartiality and independence of all NGOs working for peace, security, disarmament and humanitarian issues from political, military and economic powers and institutions. At the same time, NGOs should organically link with popular movements promoting equity, justice and diversity (such as the labour movement, women's movements and civil rights movements).

3. To protect the humanitarian principles that are linked with human rights and reject all attempts to transform the field of humanitarian assistance into a new market open to private companies.

C. Facing the challenge of globalization: equity, justice and diversity

"Globalization" needs defining. To some, it is an inevitable process driven by new technologies in electronic communication and transport, enabling information, persons, capital and goods to cross borders and reach the most remote corners of the globe at unprecedented speed. It is transforming our world into a global village, with consequent political and economic changes that open unprecedented possibilities of prosperity to all its inhabitants.

To most, globalization is a process of economic, political and cultural domination by the economically and militarily strong over the weak. For example, the combined assets of the top 200 corporations in the 1960s were 16 per cent of world gross domestic product. This increased by the early 1980s to 24 per cent and in 1995 had risen to 34 per cent. In this process, not only does the gap between the "haves" and "have nots" widen but the ranks of the poor are swelling, civil societies are being threatened, pushing an increasing number into extreme poverty, and Governments are becoming dependent. The current globalization process is not inevitable; it is the result of decisions taken by human beings. It can and must be redirected to become a democratic process in which the people are at the centre as participants and beneficiaries. We, of all ages — in particular our future generation the youth — claim a space for that transnational civil society that even now is rising on the world scene with unprecedented ties, networking, exchanges and common action among peoples, groups, communities and organizations. Before us is an emerging new consciousness worldwide that affirms

shared values of peace, equity, social justice, democracy and human rights.

Indigenous peoples are deeply concerned that the ongoing process of globalization and trade liberalization is, in many instances, leading to the denial of indigenous peoples' rights to their ancestral territories and violating their rights to the security of their land tenure, including their spiritual perspective on land and development, their traditional knowledge, their culture and their political and socio-economic systems.

The Forum urges:

The United Nations:

1. To reform and democratize all levels of decision-making in the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO and integrate them fully into the United Nations system, making these institutions accountable to the Economic and Social Council.

2. To develop a legally binding framework for regulating the actions of transnational corporations (TNCs), respecting the international labour, human rights, and sustainable environmental standards set by the United Nations and its relevant specialized agencies. The regulatory mechanism should include the active participation of workers and communities directly affected by TNC operations in order to prevent abuses and to subordinate TNCs to democratic civil authority and community-based modelling of socio-economic systems.

3. To exempt developing countries from implementing the WTO Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement and to take these rights out of any new rounds of negotiations, ensuring that no such new issues are introduced.

4. To examine and regulate transnational corporations and the increasingly negative influence of their trade on the environment. The attempt by companies to patent life is ethically unacceptable.

5. To move towards democratic political control of the global economy so that it may serve our vision.

6. To recognize and enshrine legislatively the right of self-determination of indigenous peoples and to acknowledge their sovereign right to their languages, knowledge, educational systems, living spaces, intellectual property and biological security.

Governments:

1. To recognize that aspects of globalization seriously threaten environmental sustainability and cultural diversity and heritage, as well as the common good.

2. To exclude fresh water, food, education, health care and other human essential common goods from private monopolization, and to regulate them with the view to protecting and expanding the global commons.

3. To educate all people, particularly youth, about the dynamics of globalization and how their behaviour, for example consumption and purchasing habits, can affect them and their country's economy and perpetuate the negative effects of globalization. To support this education with measures to reduce the market practices aimed at inducing resource-intensive consumption.

4. To protect indigenous peoples' rights through legislation, in the face of corporate transgressions of these rights.

5. To develop migration policies, both emigration and immigration, in conformity with human rights standards, particularly to respect the global principle of freedom of circulation for all.

6. To make serious commitments to restructure the global financial architecture based on principles of equity, transparency, accountability and democracy, and to balance, with the participation of civil society organizations, the monetary means to favour human endeavour and ecology, such as an alternative time-based currency. To give particular attention to eradication of unequal taxation, tax havens, and money-laundering operations, and to impose new forms of taxation, such as the Tobin tax, and regional and national capital controls. To direct the international financial institutions to eliminate the negative

conditionalities of structural adjustment programmes.

7. To reform the international financial institutions (IFIs) and the World Trade Organization to ensure greater transparency and democracy and to support the establishment of a consultative mechanism with civil society. To ensure that IFIs provide capital for sustainable development to vulnerable people. Sustainable funds could be raised through a currency transfer tax, which could also help to reduce currency speculation, and a tax on the rental value of land and natural resources.

8. To endeavour to stop the globalization of education among children and youth through which large corporate entities are allowed to compromise or control the education system and marginalize the role of local and national Governments.

9. To exclude from commercial exchange the human body and parts of the human body.

Civil society:

1. To support community self-reliance and democracy by ensuring people-centred, free and independent non-commercial media infrastructures, including community radio, telephone and personal computers.

2. To support the development of a concept of globalization defined from a polycentric and pluri-cultural perspective, assuming and respecting, preserving and developing cultural diversities.

3. To mobilize public support and proactively organize periodic conferences on globalization, both nationally and internationally, benefiting from the new and available research of the scientific community. To encourage the building and strengthening of local communities and make their concerns known at these events and through other initiatives.

D. Human rights

Entering the new millennium, the fulfilment of human rights is threatened by numerous challenges. The increasing economic gaps and the unprecedented increase in poverty that are the result of the existing world economic order constitute the greatest and most unjust violations of human rights: the misery and death of millions of innocent people every year. We are witnessing some of the worst violations of human rights, including the use of food as a weapon, in the context of the armed conflicts and civil wars, which have been erupting with increasing frequency. Moreover, civilians are bearing the brunt of the deployment of weapons of mass and indiscriminate destruction in such conflicts. We are also witnessing a resurgence of racism, fascism, xenophobia, homophobia, hate crimes, ethnocide and genocide, which impact most greatly on indigenous peoples and other disadvantaged or under-represented groups; the resurgence of patriarchy that threatens to erode the gains made by women; the persistence of the worst forms of child labour; the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of massive and systematic violations of human rights; the ongoing and deepening process of globalization, which undermines internationally recognized human rights, labour rights and environmental standards; the continued insulation from human rights accountability of non-state actors, ranging from transnational corporations and international financial institutions to fundamentalist civil society organizations and criminal syndicates; an upsurge of violence, militarism and armed conflict; the increase and growth of authoritarian regimes; and the fact that human rights defenders continue to be highly vulnerable targets of repression in many areas of the globe.

The United Nations human rights treaty regime, composed of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the relevant covenants and conventions, is acknowledged to be one of the three core objectives of the United Nations — human rights, development and peace. In the twenty-first century, we must make advances on all three fronts simultaneously or we will put our world at great risk.

1. Indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights

The indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights have been repeatedly reaffirmed at the level of rhetoric. However, in practice civil and political rights have been given a higher priority than economic, social and cultural rights, often to the detriment of both sets of rights.

The Forum calls on:

The United Nations:

1. To review its own human rights institutions and practices to achieve balance in the allocation of resources to both sets of rights, and to conclude expeditiously the negotiations on the draft optional protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

2. To expeditiously adopt binding international instruments on the rights of indigenous peoples, minorities, older persons and the disabled.

Governments:

Not to justify neglect of one set of rights over the other but to ensure that all individual and collective human rights are safeguarded in the pursuit of sustainable development, investment and trade.

Civil society and especially human rights organizations:

To fully appreciate the indivisibility of human rights.

2. The human right to development

Member States, by consensus at several United Nations global conferences, have reaffirmed the right to development as an inalienable human right and an integral part of fundamental human freedoms. Moreover, development is essential for the realization of the capacities of boys and girls. However, obstacles continue to impede the effective realization of the right to development.

The Forum urges:

All Governments, the United Nations and civil society:

To cooperate in appropriate actions to effectively realize the right to development as a matter of utmost urgency so that the basic needs of all peoples, including indigenous peoples, the disadvantaged and the under-represented, are fulfilled. In this context, the immediate cancellation of poor country debt is imperative.

3. Universal ratification, without reservations

Universal ratification of international human rights treaties, which are the result of already completed international negotiations, is essential if they are truly to provide a common human rights standard for humanity.

Regional and national human rights instruments have a vital contribution to make to strengthening and complementing international human rights standards.

The Forum urges:

The United Nations:

1. To strengthen its technical cooperation, enabling Governments to ratify human rights treaties and fulfil their obligations thereunder.

2. To ensure that no new international or regional treaties are adopted that contravene existing human rights instruments.

Governments:

To fulfil their commitments already made in this regard at the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights and to set specific time-frames for reviewing reservations and initiating national processes for considering ratification.

Civil society:

To continue to press Governments to ratify and remove reservations and to raise public awareness of the importance of so doing.

4. National implementation

The Forum is concerned about the hypocrisy of States that fail to incorporate into their national laws the international human rights treaties they have ratified. Moreover, even where national laws exist, implementation leaves much to be desired.

The Forum calls upon:

The United Nations agencies:

To ensure that Governments fulfil their treaty obligations, including their reporting and implementing obligations, providing, if necessary, the technical cooperation needed to do so.

Governments:

1. To effectively incorporate and implement the human rights treaties that they have ratified.

2. To eliminate prostitution of boys and girls and the worst forms of child labour.

Civil society:

To draw attention to failures in implementation and identify obstacles and ways of overcoming them. Moreover, they are entitled to full protection in so doing.

5. International implementation of human rights standards

The Forum expressed concern about continuing selectivity and double standards in the international enforcement of human rights. The Forum stressed the need for more effective adherence to international human rights standards, especially by the Governments of the permanent members of the Security Council and all other members as well. At the same time, it is essential for international organizations of trade, finance and investment, as well as transnational corporations, to be held fully accountable for their policies and actions that impact on human rights and workers' rights.

The Forum insists that:

The United Nations:

1. Resume its leadership role in spearheading negotiations towards a binding international code of conduct for transnational corporations.

2. Ensure that all international organizations are fully compliant with international human rights standards and core labour rights.

3. Draft and adopt an international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities to promote and protect the human rights of persons with disabilities.

4. Stop imposing economic sanctions, which deprive people of their basic economic, social and environmental rights and which make their struggle for survival, as well as for civil and political rights, more difficult.

Governments:

1. Adopt and implement national policies and laws to effectively protect their peoples from violations of their human rights resulting from the actions of such organizations.

2. Support and not repress civil society organizations, particularly human rights defenders and others monitoring violations and working towards redress.

Civil society organizations:

Sensitize Governments to their obligation to protect human rights defenders.

6. Promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls

The goal of ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls also remains unmet. The Forum affirms the universality and indivisibility of women's rights as human rights, and calls for an end to all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. The Forum recognizes the human rights of all women and girls as an unalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights that must be promoted and realized at all stages of the life cycle.

The Forum calls on the United Nations, Governments and civil society to recognize and assure equal opportunity and full participation of women in all aspects of society, including leadership, the economy and decision-making.

The Forum calls upon:

The United Nations:

To ensure that gender mainstreaming effectively brings women into leadership positions throughout the system and a gender perspective into all its programmes and policies; to provide gender training; and to strengthen its mechanisms for the protection and promotion of the human rights of women and girls.

Governments:

To allocate more resources and create an enabling environment for implementation of their commitments to women's and girl's human rights,

including the promotion of women into decision-making positions, the repeal of all discriminatory laws, the introduction of effective legislation to prevent violence against women and girls, protection for the full diversity of women, the enforcement of legislation promoting women's and girls' equality, the collection of sex-disaggregated data and the guarantee of women's and girls' rights to development, education and health.

Civil society:

To fully incorporate women into leadership at every level and gender perspectives into all its operations; to hold Governments accountable for their obligations to promote and protect the human rights of women and girls; and to act as monitors of the implementation of commitments to end discrimination and violence against women and girls.

7. Promoting awareness of and support for asserting human rights

Forum participants reiterated the importance of human rights education in building a culture of human rights and empowering people to claim their rights.

The Forum advocates that:

The United Nations:

1. Take effective steps to make meaningful its Decade on Human Rights Education (1995-2004). The historic and economic roots of racism must be brought to the attention of the United Nations World Conference on Racism in order to advance the struggle against racism.

2. Focus more attention on the protection of human rights of older persons and adopt effective measures for full respect and implementation of their rights.

3. Heighten awareness of the human rights of peoples in disputed territories and conflict areas where freedom of speech and movement is severely restricted.

4. Agencies should refrain from exploiting the images of victims in conflict areas because this dehumanizes them.

Governments:

Ensure the removal of all obstacles impeding civil society in such activities and advocate human rights education for all.

Civil society:

Continue and strengthen its activities in promoting human rights awareness across all sectors of society.

8. Universal realization of human rights

Human rights will not be truly universal unless they are realized for all, including neglected or excluded groups and groups at risk, notably children, youth, older persons, women, minorities, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants, immigrants, the disabled the mentally ill, the unemployed, the homeless and those subject to discrimination on grounds of race, religion, caste, sex, place of birth, language, age, nationality, sexual orientation or other grounds. Economic exploitation, cultural practices and other factors continue to impede the realization of human rights for many and diverse groups.

Unequal economic development between countries promotes forced migration to developed countries. The human rights of these economic migrants, especially those labelled as alien or undocumented, are systematically violated without consideration of their significant contribution to the host country economy.

The goal of ending all forms of colonization in the world remains as yet unachieved and the right to self-determination is far from universally realized, especially for peoples living under occupation.

Further, in the context of the right not to be complicit in killings, we call for full legal recognition of the rights of conscientious objectors.

The Forum urges:

The United Nations:

1. To strengthen the existing international human rights system to ensure full recognition, respect for and realization of human rights for all; and to implement all United Nations resolutions calling

for self-determination and an end to military occupation.

2. To protect the rights of people under military occupation.

3. To strengthen the monitoring of human rights violations of migrant workers and their families.

4. To establish a fair and effective International Criminal Court (ICC).

Governments:

1. To take all steps, including affirmative action, where necessary, to remedy the continuing neglect of people whose human rights are yet unrealized; and to move urgently to sign and ratify the ICC treaty.

2. To provide effective redress and remedies for the victims of human rights violations, ensuring that the burden of proof does not fall on the victim.

Civil society:

To fortify its advocacy role in pressing for the recognition and realization of human rights for all, and to encourage all States to sign and ratify promptly the ICC treaty.

E. Sustainable development and the environment

Sustainable development is the recognition that environment and development issues should be addressed in an integrated manner. Agenda 21 also promoted the concept of major groups, wherein sectors of society, including local Governments, are acknowledged as important players in bringing about sustainable development.

Eight years have passed since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and there is a feeling of frustration by civil society over the slow progress or non-implementation of commitments by national and international bodies. The spirit of Rio is diminishing. The commitment of developed nations to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product (GNP) to overseas development assistance to developing nations has been met by very few countries. The transfer of environmentally sound technology from developed countries to developing countries is hampered by intellectual property rights demands. The balance between environment and development is tilted towards the environmental concerns favoured by the Governments of developed countries.

The dominant patterns of production and consumption are being globalized, causing more environmental devastation of life-supporting ecosystems and massive loss of biodiversity. The Brundtland Commission recommended that sustainable development be considered on an equal footing with economic, ecological and social development. Currently, globalization is giving priority to economic development at the expense of social development and ecological conservation. The effects of such unsustainable development has marginalized and impoverished many, including the owners and custodians of traditional knowledge and biodiversity, indigenous peoples, older persons, farmers and women. Globalization must incorporate local sustainability. Due to the efforts of some civil society organizations together with some countries from the South and the North, the issue of bio-safety has occupied centre stage in the Convention on Biological Diversity. The adoption of the Bio-safety Protocol in late 1999 was a major breakthrough in regulating the transborder transfer of genetically modified organisms.

The Forum urges:

The United Nations:

1. To strengthen its capacity to monitor Governments and require their compliance with Agenda 21, their commitments made in Rio, commitments made during sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Copenhagen Declaration, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

2. To make a global assessment of unsustainable development and its impacts on environment, human settlements and social development, thereby building upon the studies made by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and other United Nations agencies and civil society organizations. On the basis of these studies and policy proposals, it should play an active role in promoting a world

solidarity fund and in regulating international financial institutions, trade bodies and corporations to ensure that they adhere to the principles and programmes adopted in Rio and Copenhagen.

3. To forge stronger partnerships and broader cooperation with major groups, including local governments and those sectors that are actively involved in bringing about sustainable development, especially at the local level. It should also coordinate and harmonize the policies and programmes of the various United Nations agencies and bodies to ensure that duplication is avoided and synergy is achieved.

4. To encourage its organs, especially the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNDP, to actively support the establishment of sustainability centres to advise local governments on the implementation of Agenda 21 in local communities through comprehensive, integrated development policies and strategies. Such centres should be part of international networks for the exchange of knowledge and experience.

5. To support positive action for indigenous peoples and other groups who experience discrimination as a barrier to progress. Such groups include women, youth, children, older persons, people with disabilities, occupied peoples, refugees, minorities, displaced persons and migrants.

6. To establish a global habitat conservation fund to purchase comprehensive protection of threatened, critical ecological habitat worldwide. The fund should accrue revenues from a nominal (0.5 -1.0 per cent) royalty on worldwide fossil energy production — oil, natural gas, coal — collecting at least $5 billion to $10 billion annually.

7. To examine how it should restructure to implement the changes necessary to give clear priority to sustainable human development.

8. To encourage UNEP and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to create an appropriate legal framework for the protection of marine life.

Governments:

1. To comply with and implement the declarations, conventions and treaties they have signed and meet the commitments they have made, including those in Agenda 21. They should ratify the important protocols of the multilateral environmental agreements, including:

   (a) Agreements which set frameworks for the reduction of global warming (these should be ratified by 2002);

   (b) The Bio-safety Protocol;

   (c) The agreement by donor Governments to allocate 0.7 per cent GNP for official development assistance.

2. To examine their economic models of development for sustainability and strive to restructure away from export-oriented, import-dependent and debt-driven models, if these are unsustainable. To move towards patterns of production and consumption that are sustainable and centred on the health and well-being of people and the environment.

3. To assess the negative environmental and social impacts of unsustainable development and focus on how they could be redressed. Their development programmes should promote sustainable development, such as the conservation of water resources, sustainable agriculture, the development of renewable energy sources and support for the sustainable development knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples, women and farmers, while eliminating military and unsustainable infrastructure projects.

4. To support the establishment of sustainable development training centres, owned, operated and managed by youth for youth. To support their involvement, especially youth from the South, in all forums and at all levels as integral partners and leaders in these processes, giving them ownership. To encourage the development of a global youth fund co-financed by donor Governments and/or agencies and managed by the NGO Steering Committee of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

5. To endorse the Earth Charter in the General Assembly.

6. To establish and strengthen multi-stakeholder mechanisms, such as national councils for sustainable development, to facilitate the implementation of Earth Summit agreements.

7. To promote the establishment of microcredit facilities, especially for farmers and women, and to promote their access to forms of land tenure that facilitate access to and ownership of land.

8. To increase interactions between central and local government organizations for the common goal of improving living conditions in urban and rural settlements.

9. To adopt comprehensive, integrated development policies and strive to enable local communities to achieve self-sufficiency and management of local natural resources, achieving sustainability through land use control and through measures that reduce resource-intensive forced consumption.

10. To recognize and enshrine in legislation the right of self-determination of indigenous peoples, and their right to be guided by their own principles and perspectives, as expressed in their draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples that has been submitted to the United Nations.

Civil society:

1. To continue challenging Governments and international institutions to adhere to the agenda for sustainable and social development. It should also monitor the way Governments are implementing Agenda 21 and the Copenhagen Declaration.

2. To broaden and strengthen the involvement and action of various sectors of civil society involved in developing and nurturing sustainable patterns of production and consumption. Documentation of best practices by civil society in the area of sustainable and social development should be shared.

3. To enhance networking between civil society organizations and movements. The diverse perspectives and experiences of different sectors — women, indigenous peoples, farmers and others — should be widely disseminated and integrated in the formulation of development models at the local, national and international levels.

4. To actively promote awareness of the fact that once basic needs have been met, human development is about being more, not having more. Fundamental changes in human values are the best means to transform the culture of consumerism.

5. To adopt and disseminate the Earth Charter as a tool for promotion of values and actions which will create sustainable development.

6. To ensure that an appropriate liaison be developed between the NGO Steering Committee of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Sports and Environment Commission to harmonize implementation of the IOC's Agenda 21 for Sports and the Environment within the United Nations system.

7. To welcome the concept and support implementation of the Internet global environmental fund proposed by Global Environmental Action, by which global citizens can participate in funding civil society organizations to implement sustainable development projects.

F. Strengthening and democratizing the United Nations and international organizations

A major task of the world community in the twenty-first century will be to strengthen and greatly enhance the role of the United Nations in the global context. Governments must recommit themselves to the realization of the goals and mandates of the Charter of the United Nations. A challenging task is to firmly protect the integrity of the United Nations, counter the erosion of its role, and further strengthen and augment international institutions capable of implementing and enforcing international standards, norms and law, leading towards the formation of a new political and economic order.

The world community must be particularly concerned over the ongoing trend towards diminishing

the influence of developing countries in the governance of international institutions, which will only undermine their credibility and effectiveness.

Strengthening and democratizing the United Nations and other international institutions will require the broad support and involvement of member States, regional bodies, civil society and citizens everywhere, including young and older people.

The Forum urges:

The United Nations:

1. To strengthen the coordinating role of the General Assembly to ensure that it can fulfil the mandates that it already has according to the Charter of the United Nations.

2. To make the Security Council more representative of the world. Permanent membership in the Security Council is problematic because it blocks change and fails to accommodate evolving realities. Thus, the United Nations should begin to phase out the existing permanent membership in favour of a more flexible and accountable system. The Council should be immediately enlarged with newly elected members drawn from member States from different regions of the world on a rotational basis.

3. To limit and move towards eliminating the use of the veto. The United Nations must move towards veto restriction. First could be an enlargement of the area of "procedural votes" for which the Charter excludes the veto. The veto must be restricted to Chapter VII peace issues only. It is unacceptable that the veto should apply to such matters as election of the Secretary-General. Complete veto abolition should be sought as a step towards the elimination of permanency.

4. To develop more effective means not requiring the use of force to prevent the outbreak of war and other threats to the peace and security of people. This will require a far more institutionalized and analytical approach to the causes of war and the ways to prevent conflict. Among other things, the Security Council must take more action to prevent conflict over raw materials and other basic resources. A greatly expanded Secretariat office on the prevention and resolution of conflict is required, as is a fund that can quickly be deployed to mitigate conflict-producing social and economic crises.

5. To make the International Court of Justice (ICJ) the locus of a more effective, integrated system of international justice. The compulsory jurisdiction of the world Court must be accepted by all States. In the absence of voluntary compliance, the Security Council should enforce ICJ decisions and other international legal obligations under Article 94 of the Charter of the United Nations.

6. To consider the creation of a United Nations parliamentary body related to the General Assembly. One proposal that should be considered is the creation of a consultative parliamentary assembly. Any parliamentary body established at the United Nations should have its membership selected through an election process, and should conduct its business in an open, democratic manner.

7. To act on the resolution of the Commission on Human Rights calling for the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples.

8. To provide a key role in arbitrating between the interests of creditors and debtor nations and in monitoring how funds released by debt cancellation are spent.

9. To recognize and support young people and youth organizations as active participants and equal partners in all United Nations processes. The independence and integrity of their work must be protected. The United Nations and Governments are urged to support the initiatives and efforts set up by youth organizations themselves.

10. To strengthen information exchange and coordination among international organizations and specialized agencies so that the work developed by such bodies as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is taken into account by the other organizations and bodies within their own policies.

11. To guarantee that international meetings and information documents involving civil society representatives are translated into the main international languages: English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian and Chinese.

12. To take measures to guarantee and to facilitate the participation of NGO representatives based in developing countries, Eastern Europe and indigenous peoples.

13. To strengthen the United Nations contact with citizens by providing increased resources for NGO relations offices throughout the United Nations system and by enhancing the United Nations network of information centres, as an indispensable resource in mobilizing support for the United Nations among the world's peoples.

Governments:

1. To increase substantially the regular and peacekeeping budgets of the United Nations. The United Nations cannot carry out its many urgent tasks without substantially more resources and more staff. This budget could be doubled immediately, to very good effect. United Nations budget problems have had a serious negative effect on peacekeeping. In addition, the budgets of United Nations agencies should be increased to better support their work.

2. To pay United Nations dues on time, in full and without conditions. United Nations discussion of global taxes and fees have been stifled by the threat of a funding cut-off by a single Member State. This blackmail must be rejected, and the United Nations must vigorously explore the possibilities of alternate funding from such sources.

3. To move towards creation of alternative revenue sources for the United Nations. The United Nations should set up expert groups and begin the necessary intergovernmental negotiations towards establishing alternative revenue sources, which could include fees for the commercial use of the oceans, fees for airplane use of the skies, fees for use of the electromagnetic spectrum, fees on foreign exchange transactions (i.e., the Tobin Tax) and a tax on the carbon content of fuels.

4. To ensure that a gender perspective is integrated at all remaining stages of the process to establish the International Criminal Court and at all stages of the proceedings of the functioning Court, and that the particular needs of children, the elderly and persons with disabilities are considered.

5. To extend consultative rights of access and participation to NGOs. Governments should complete the process of extending to NGOs rights of access and participation in the General Assembly and its Main Committees and subsidiary bodies.

Civil society:

To support the creation and funding of a global civil society forum to meet at least every two to three years in the period leading up to the annual session of the General Assembly, provided that such a forum is conducted democratically and transparently and is truly representative of all sectors of civil society and all parts of the world.